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# Alliance Charter School Project

## Application for Charter

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## Application for Charter

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CHARTER APPLICATION : PART I

1. MISSION STATEMENT:

*Describe the core philosophy or underlying purpose of the proposed school.*

The Alliance Charter School proposes to create an educational environment that offers its students a high level of experiential academic achievement coupled with a strong sense of wonder and community. Grounded in the developmentally-based curricula of the Montessori Method, Alliance seeks to use emerging media and computer technologies as an integral part of each child's school experience. This community school begins with the premise that its relationship with local neighborhoods and families is an essential partnership, and strives to keep this as a significant focus in all decision-making.

"It has often been said to me that I am able to confer upon children the gift of joy, but I have not given joy to children– I have allowed the child to work. Joy comes from the inner life, being free, so that the mental faculties are developed...

In every stage of life, at every age, liberty is the realization of the loftier possibilities of one's energies, independence, and perfection."

**Maria Montessori**




"While schools in other lands have been much more successful in inculcating scholastic knowledge-- in conveying notations, lists of facts, and disciplinary concepts-- I am not convinced that the resultant understanding is necessarily much greater. The transfer from the scholastic setting to contexts in which such knowledge can be readily applied is not easy to achieve in any society. What is needed is the creation of a climate in which students come naturally to link their intuitive ways of knowing with scholastic and disciplinary ways of knowing."

**Howard Gardner**

"It is not enough to teach a man a specialty. Through it he may become a kind of useful machine but not a harmoniously developed personality. It is essential that the student acquire an understanding of and a lively feeling for values. He must acquire a vivid sense of the beautiful and of the morally good. Otherwise he-- with his specialized knowledge-- more closely resembles a well-trained dog than a harmoniously developed person... overemphasis on the competitive system and premature specialization on the ground of immediate usefulness kill the spirit on which all cultural life depends, specialized knowledge included. Teaching should be such that what is offered is perceived as a valuable gift and not as a hard duty."

**Albert Einstein**



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## 2. SCHOOL OBJECTIVES:

### *A. What are the school's broad objectives for student learning?*

The Alliance Charter School's objectives are for student learning to be:

Experiential - Initial learning experiences will be based on student activity with concrete teaching materials. These materials will introduce fundamental skill concepts. At developmentally appropriate junctures, these are further supported by work with electronically-generated, individualized instructional material.

Exploratory - Classroom environments will be developed as individual learning centers linked sequentially with respect to content. Curriculum areas will be related across disciplines, with learning viewed as a process involving many individual styles and personal modalities. Teachers will see their roles as facilitators of student-centered learning, and will provide individualized support for the diverse learning styles in process within the classroom.

Integrated - Academic discipline areas will be shown as not existing separate from each other. The acquisition of necessary skills in math and language will be seen as a direct benefit to the child's work and research in content areas.

Challenging - Children and parents will be respected and involved as partners in the child's education. Highly individualized instructional techniques and record-management systems will allow children to advance as appropriate, while providing a set of benchmarks for demonstrated mastery of skill acquisition. Students will be intimately involved with the mechanisms by which their work is evaluated, will work with teachers to develop practical routines for reporting which are built on personal responsibility, peer accountability, and will work within a climate in which trust is a fundamental ethic.



*B. Describe any non-academic goals for student performance.*

Of equal importance to academic achievement, emphasis will be placed on the value and skill of peer teaching, the ability to budget time, to follow through on tasks, the identification and responsiveness to individual learning strategies, and group problem solving. Alliance Charter School will place more validity on authentic data rather than quantifiable data.

*C. What type of community environment do you hope to foster at your school?*

The Alliance Charter School will strive to give each a child and family a feeling of ownership in both their classroom and their education. The school will provide a nurturing environment centering on meeting the affective as well as cognitive needs of the whole child.

As technological means develop within the next few years, the Alliance Charter School will seek to redefine its own "school concept" by implementing off-site media-based instruction directed to individuals within the communities served. Those who can articulate even the most basic services made possible by current electronic means are often seen as visionaries. But tomorrow's technology is available to us today. Alliance Charter School will provide on-line school information services initially and will maximize the role of media in the establishment of direct communications links to client communities.

"Today those things which occupy us in the field of education are the interests of humanity at large and of civilization. Before such great forces we can recognize only one country– the entire world."

**Maria Montessori**



### 3. STATEMENT OF NEED

#### *A. Why is there a need for this type of school?*

The Alliance Charter School project, by virtue of its roots in Montessori elementary education, offers a dimension of hands-on education and commitment to peer collaboration historically unavailable in traditional classrooms. Montessori elementary education offers multiple-age classroom groupings, an emphasis on positive social interactions and problem-solving skills, individualized progress and assessment, responsibility for care of the school environment, and a substantial number of manipulative material resources for skill introduction.

Montessori elementary education has become a recognized, contributory alternative to traditional methods, which can be documented by the extent to which it has expanded in the public sector substantially, generally in the form of magnet school offerings, during the last ten years. In regions where Montessori elementary magnet schools are offered, officials commonly report substantially increased parent involvement and support, popularity with economically and racially diverse parent and student populations, and an enhanced sense of school community within teaching and administrative staffs. These responses to the creation of Montessori magnet programs have not been limited to specific areas or populations. Publicly supported Montessori programs are now available in many urban and rural districts ranging in size from Dade County, Florida, to rural Tennessee.

Montessori education has demonstrated its ability to provide constructive education and energized school communities since renewed interest in Dr. Montessori's work began in this country in the late 1950's. Fundamental Montessori practices have anticipated several of the major schools of thought now held as a vision by many educators. This vision is already enacted daily as reality by thousands of children in Montessori classrooms worldwide. The purpose of the Alliance Charter School is to move these practices out of the upper economic sector, to make them available to a much more diverse population, and to do so with a commitment to further experimentation in developmentally appropriate education.





*B. Explain why a charter school would help to effectively address this need.*

Montessori elementary education is currently unavailable either in the public or private sectors within a reasonable commuting distance of any potential school site. The unavailability of alternate educational forms in general will act as a fundamental criterion for choice of the ultimate location of the Alliance Charter School, as will the presence of a substantial population whose economic profile would not allow for the cost of transportation to or payment of tuition for those few distant Montessori elementary programs (the nearest being located in Duxbury, Scituate, Hingham, and Milton). The Alliance Charter School will provide experiences to elementary children in several southeastern Massachusetts of quality at least equal to these independent school programs.

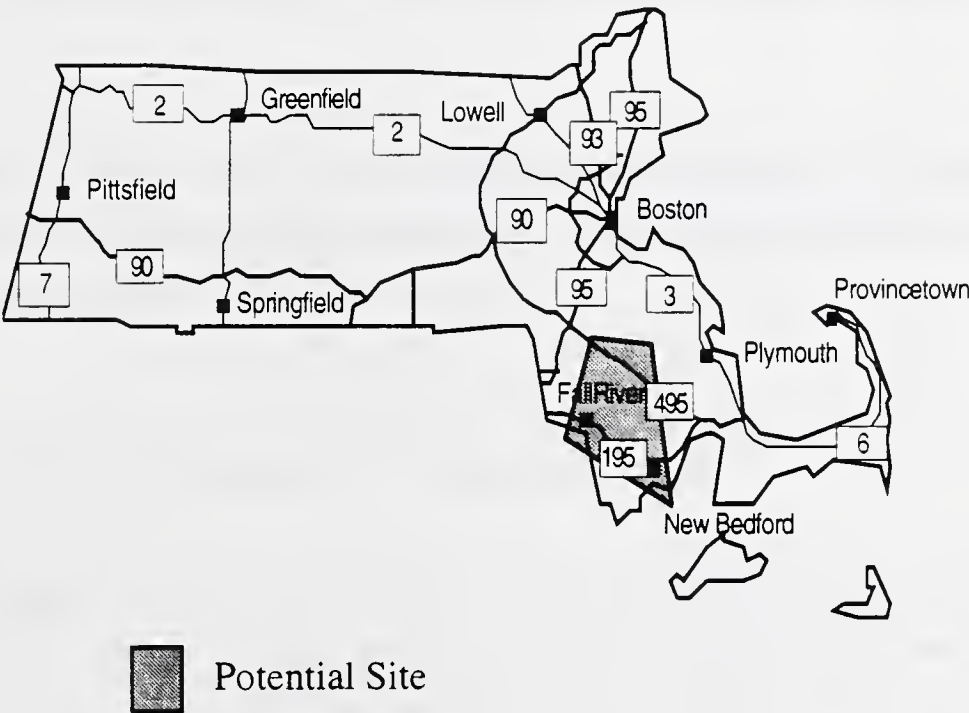




4. SCHOOL DEMOGRAPHICS:

A. Describe the area where the school will be located. If a facility has already been secured, please state so.

The Alliance Charter School is proposed for an area in Bristol and Plymouth countries defined roughly by a quadrilateral including Taunton, Middleboro, and Fall River. The selection of the final school site will be influenced by criteria related to the economic and racial diversity made possible by the specific community, and the response by already existing groups as news of this endeavor creates interest in areas contiguous to this quadrilateral. The range of communities served could shift as local groups develop enthusiasm for this project.





*B. Why was this location selected? Are there other locations suitable to the needs and focus of the school?*

In contrast to communities which currently offer independent Montessori elementary programs (Duxbury, Scituate, Hingham, Milton), the region chosen offers: 1. limited choice currently in educational methods beyond traditional public or parochial schools, 2. a higher percentage of non-executive, non-professional occupations, 3. a somewhat more racially diverse population (although the non-white population throughout the region remains lower than desirable, which will occasion a program for specific recruitment of minority students and staff.

*C. Describe any unique characteristics of the student population to be served.*

The Alliance Charter School will be open for admission to students of all academic abilities. It is hoped that our population will reflect the profile of the community along social and racial lines.

*D. What is the school's anticipated enrollment?*

Initially, the school will seek to enroll sufficient children from ages 6-9 to establish two mixed-age 1st-3rd grade classrooms of no more than 27 children. Additional classes may be established for children K-1, and for children 9-12 (4th-6th), if sufficient local response is perceived. The exact upper age limit will be influenced by the average age of transition to middle school or junior high in the primary communities served.

Total school enrollment by the year 2000 is projected between 180-210 students from ages 5-12. Models do exist for Montessori-based programs at the secondary level. While not part of the initial charter proposal, it is likely that upward expansion would form a substantial part of the application for charter renewal.



E. *What grade levels will be served? How many students are expected to be in each grade or grouping?*

1st Year :	1 Transitional (K-1)	Maximum = 25
	2 Lower Elementary 1-3	Maximum = 2 @ 27= 54
	1 Upper Elementary 4-6	Maximum = 25
		<hr/>
		Maximum Total = 104

5. RECRUITING AND MARKETING PLAN

A. *Demonstrate how you will publicize the school to attract a sufficient pool of applicants.*

The applicants are currently in the process of finding a community liaison to begin a survey of potential sites. Besides the use of available media (community newspapers, radio, cable) in publicizing the school's formation, local Parent Information Seminars will be used liberally to bring interested parents and business leaders into the process. Alliance also hopes for a cooperative relationship with the existing public school system.

B. *Specifically, what type of outreach will be made to potential students and their families?*

1. A profile of the community is compiled.
2. A core group of interested parents is identified with the assistance of a community liaison.
3. An enrollment committee is formed.
4. A list of potential candidates is compiled.
5. A series of contacts, including direct mail and informational meetings, is made.



## 6. ADMISSIONS POLICY:

*A. Describe the admission methods and standards you will use to select students.*

Admission to the Alliance Charter School will be at the discretion of the Head of School, based on a candidate's satisfactory completion of the following (or an essentially similar) process:

1. The parent inquires about the school and meets with a designated school representative.
2. The parent observes the school (prior to opening of this school, parents may be directed to existing Montessori elementary classrooms or be provided with videotapes of classrooms).
3. The child visits and is interviewed by a school representative.
4. Records of previous school experiences are required and reviewed by the school.
5. The head reviews all documentation of the process, and admits the child on the basis of the school's perceived ability to meet the child's educational needs.

*B. Explain how these policies further the mission of the school in a non-discriminatory fashion.*

The Alliance Charter School will adopt as its ethical reference the Code of Ethics and Statement of Commitment of the National Association for the Education of Young Children, which mandates that the institution "...shall not perform in any form of discrimination based on race, religion, sex, national origin, handicap, age, or sexual preference."







## 7. PROFILE OF FOUNDING COALITION:

*A. Describe the make-up of the group or partnership that is working together to apply for a charter.*

Rob Keys is president of Beyond the Mountain, a non-profit organization registered Jan. 1, 1994. Formed originally out of Mr. Keys experiences as an elementary teacher educator in Haiti, Beyond the Mountain supports alternative education for non-traditional environments. Gary Davidson is course director of Seacoast Center Montessori Elementary Teacher Preparation Program, which offers programs leading to certification for Montessori elementary teachers. Seacoast Center is accredited by the Montessori Accreditation Council for Teacher Education (MACTE) and is affiliated with the American Montessori Society. Davidson and Keys currently serve on the faculty of both Seacoast Center and The Montessori Community School in Scituate, Ma. Neither the individuals nor the organizations named act as agents of The Montessori Community School with respect to this undertaking, nor does the Montessori Community School have involvement with the Alliance Charter School project.

*B. Discuss how the group came together, as well as any affiliation with existing schools, educational programs, businesses, non-profits, or any other entities or groups.*

Colleagues for many years at TMCS and Seacoast, the partners have long shared a common vision for education. The formation of the Alliance Charter School is a natural progression in their efforts to provide high quality experiences for children. No formal relationship between Beyond The Mountain Foundation and Seacoast Center exists at this time, although the school will have an association with Seacoast Center as a source of new curricula and as a site for student teachers.

*C. Include any plans for further recruitment of founders or organizers of the school.*

The partnership has an established relationship, written support, and anticipates involvement with Bruce Humphrey, president of Wearguard, Inc., and Gary MacDonald, faculty member at Massachusetts Institute of Technology.



**8. TIMETABLE:**

*A. Discuss a timetable of events leading to the opening of a charter school.*

Spring - Summer 1994 - Complete application process, explore potential communities, identify community liaisons.

Fall 1994 - Secure site, begin process of securing permits and approvals, form working committees from interested parents.

Winter 1994 - Begin recruitment of students and staffing.

Spring 1995 - Process applications and admission procedures, set up bookkeeping.

Summer 1995 - Finalize class lists, final preparation of environments.

On-going - Exploration of possible grants, procurement of support from business and academic communities.

*B. If preparing for a 1994 charter, demonstrate the feasibility of opening school doors this fall, in the event of a legislative change in the starting date.*

N/A

